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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/642,937	08/18/2003	Binh T. Nguyen	IGTIP280/P000836-001	4289
79646 7590 06/25/2010 Weaver Austin Villeneuve & Sampson LLP - IGT Attn: IGT P.O. Box 70250 Oakland, CA 94612-0250				
EXAMINER				
YOO, JASSON H				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
3714				
NOTIFICATION DATE		DELIVERY MODE		
06/25/2010		ELECTRONIC		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

USPTO@wavsip.com

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/642,937

Applicant(s)

NGUYEN ET AL.

Examiner

Jasson H. Yoo

Art Unit

3714

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
 - If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
 - Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 6/10/10.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-3, 6, 7, 9-15, 17-21, 24, 25, 27-29, 61, 62 and 64-68 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 10-12, 27-29, 65 and 66 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-3, 6, 7, 9, 13-15, 17-21, 24, 25, 61, 62, 64, 67 and 68 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-840)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 6/10/10
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 6/10/10 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-3, 6-7, 9, 13-15, 17-21, 24-25, 61, 67-68 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker'163 (US 6,077,163) in view of Shulman (US 2002/0123377).

Claims 1, 61. Walker'163 discloses a computer implement gaming method comprising and computer readable medium including computer executable program code for instructing a computer comprising (col. 3:63-4:5):

configuring a first gaming unit for playing a game (102 in Figs 1-2B), the first gaming unit being selected by a player to play in the game, comprising loading gaming software to said first gaming unit (The electronic gaming unit 102 loads and executes the gaming software to play the game, cols. 3:63-4:5);

receiving an identifier (player game identification information stored on player tracking card, cols. 4:45-49, 6:1-12) at a controller comprising a processor and a memory from said first gaming unit (CPU 210 and Memory 216 and 218 in Fig. 2A), wherein the identifier is associated with a game card (player tracking card, cols. 4:45-49), and wherein the game card is provided to the player in response to paying fee (Player tracking game card is associated with player paid credit information, cols. 3:36-39, 6:5-6);

determining whether the identifier received from the first gaming unit is authentic (network server verifies the player identifying information, col. 3:54-56);

determining a time duration the player may play in the game based on the identifier, if the identifier is determined to be authentic (flat rate, time session is determined, cols. 3:6-17, 6:36-55);

initializing a timer with the amount of time (in other words, the length of time of the flat rate play session is established and the CPU can initiate a countdown, Walker'163, cols. 5:5-14, 12:30-51, 13:5-55);

starting the timer (Walker'163, cols. 12:30-51);

enabling the first gaming unit to play the game for the time duration if the identifier is determined to be authentic, thereby allowing the player to use the first gaming unit to play the game (cols. 2:3-27, 3:54-62);

stopping the timer after the timer has run for the determined amount of time duration (countdown reached zero, Walker'163, cols. 12:43-51) or when the player terminates play on said first gaming unit prior to expiration of the amount of time of said time duration (player terminates play to play the remaining interval at a later time, Walker'163, cols. 13:5-55);

receiving a score of the player (an outcome and the associated payout is received, col.4:6-61);

determining a winning player of the game if any (col. 4:6-61); and

if the winning player of the game is determined, generating data indicative of a value payout to be awarded to the winning player (When the player wins, the machine stores the credits RAM 18 and displays the current balance in the video display area, col. 4:20-26).

Walker'163 discloses a computer implement gaming method as discussed above but fails to teach the game is a tournament, wherein the tournament is in progress when the identifier is received, and the player plays in the time remaining the tournament in progress. Nevertheless, it would have been obvious to modify Walker'163 of playing a flat rate game session, and play the flat rate game session on a game tournament in progress, and play for time remaining in the tournament. In an analogous art to methods of play games, Shulman discloses a method of allowing a player to play in a tournament

in progress, based on the time remaining in the tournament. More specifically, Shulman discloses a player can join the tournament after observing the tournament that's in progress (paragraphs 12, 16-18, and 31). The player can conveniently select the time periods during which the player will participate in the tournament (paragraph 12). The player can play in the tournament until the tournament ends ("until the remaining time in the tournament" since tournament ends at a specified time, paragraph 18). This allows the player to observe the game, including the type of players, their betting habits, and the aggressiveness of their play before joining the tournament (paragraph 16). Although Shulman's of playing a tournament game may be based on a poker game, Walker explicitly discloses that the method of playing a flat rate session may be implemented to poker games (video poker/poker slot machines, col. 18:7). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Walker'163 method of playing a game, and incorporate Shulman's method of playing in a tournament in progress for the time remaining in the tournament, in order to allow a player to participate in a tournament after the player has observed the game.

Claim 2. The combination of Walker'163, and Shulman discloses the identifier is printed on the tournament game card (Walker'163, col. 4:42-53).

Claim 3. The combination of Walker'163, and Shulman discloses the identifier is electronically encoded on the tournament game card (Walker'163, col. 4:42-53).

Claims 6, 24. The combination of Walker'163 and Shulman discloses determining the duration based on the identifier comprises retrieving the duration from storage based on the identifier (Walker'163, col. 3:6-39; cols. 6:49-7:20).

Claims 7, 25. The combination of Walker'163, and Shulman discloses determining the duration based on the identifier comprises decoding the identifier to determine the duration (Walker'163, cols. 3:6-39, 4:42-65).

Claim 9. The combination of Walker'163, and Shulman discloses stopping the timer at a request of the player; and restarting the timer at a request of the player if the timer has not run for the determined amount of time (Walker'163, cols. 5:5-14, 12:43-51, 13:5-55).

Claim 13. The combination of Walker'163, and Shulman discloses a gaming method according to claim 8, wherein the timer is implemented, at least in part, by the first gaming unit (Walker'163, 12:43-51).

Claim 14. The combination of Walker'163, and Shulman discloses the first gaming unit is operatively coupled to the tournament game card, wherein the timer is implemented, at least in part, by the tournament game card (player tracking device is associated with player credits/flat rate remaining, Walker'163, cols. 5:5-14, 12:43-51, 13:5-55).

Claim 15. The combination of Walker'163, and Shulman discloses the timer is implemented, at least in part, by the tournament server (database server keeps track of player credits/and flat time remaining, Walker'163, cols. 5:5-14, 12:43-51, 13:5-55).

Claim 17. The combination of Walker'163, and Shulman discloses the gaming software comprises at least one of an executable file, a configuration file, a data file, a pay table, and a plurality of seeds for a random number generator (Walker'163 discloses gaming software stored in memory to execute slot game, col. 3:63-4:5. The program inherently comprises executable file, a configuration file, a payable, and a plurality of seeds for a random number generator stored. Furthermore, Walker'163 discloses a RNG, col. 4:4-5, and a payable 228 store in memory, col. 4:17, and Fig. 6.).

Claim 18. The combination of Walker'163, and Shulman discloses the tournament game card comprises at least one of a magnetic swipe card, a smart card, a PC card, and a portable memory device (Walker'163, col. 4:43-53).

Claim 19. The combination of Walker'163 and Shulman discloses receiving the tournament score of the player before the timer has stopped (Duration is based on score/winning outcomes. Thus the individual scores are tracked before the timer has stopped, Walker'163, col. 3:6-30.).

Claim 20. The combination of Walker'163 and Shulman discloses receiving the tournament score of the player after the timer has stopped (Scores are received after the end of the game player to award the winning player).

Claim 21. See rejection for claim 1. More specifically, Walker'163 discloses the structural limitation of a server (106 in Figs.1 and 3) comprising:

a network interface (360 in Fig. 3),

a controller comprising a processor (310 in Fig. 3) and memory (320, 330 in Fig. 3) to store a game program and operate the game (col. 5:34-63). Shulman discloses a tournament server (processing station 20 in Fig. 1) for operating a tournament game.

Claim 67. See rejection for claims 1 and 21 above. More specifically, Walker'163 discloses the structural limitation of a computing system (100 in Fig. 1) including or more processors (within each gaming machine 21 in Fig. 2a, and within the server 310 in Fig. 3).

Claim 68. Walker'163 discloses the computing system includes a gaming machine (102 in Fig. 1) and a gaming server comprising the controller (106 in Fig. 3).

Claims 62 and 64 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker'163 in view of Shulman and further in view of Walker'173 (US 2002/0013173),

Claim 62. The combination of Walker'163 and Shulman discloses the method of playing for a duration of game play based on a tournament identifier and determining the time duration that the player may play in the tournament in the time remaining the tournament as discussed above (see rejection for claim 1 above), but fails to teach that the first device is not configured for playing in the tournament when the first device is selected by the player for playing the tournament. Nevertheless, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skilled in the art to configure a gaming machine to play a particular game that is not originally configured. In an analogous art to playing games on a gaming machine, Walker'173 discloses a method of configuring a gaming machine (paragraphs 28, 69) upon an identifier (paragraphs 67-68). The identifier or identification number is associated with a player tracking card (paragraph 67). After the player identification number is then authenticated (paragraphs 35, 67), the gaming machine is configured according the player's information (paragraphs 28, 69-78). The player information may configure the gaming machine to play certain games (game eligibility, paragraphs 28, 48, 62). When modifying Walker'163 in view of Shulman's method of playing a tournament with Walker'173's method of configuring gaming machines that were not originally configured, gaming machines that are not configured to play in the tournament will now be configured to play in the tournament. Thus, the player can play on any gaming machine within the casino or gaming center. Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the method of playing a tournament game as suggested by the combination of

Walker'163 and Shulman, and incorporate Walker'173's method of configuring a gaming machine, in order to allow users play a tournament game using any gaming machine within the casino.

Claim 64. The combination of Walker'163, Shulman and Walker'173 discloses determining whether the tournament identifier has been received within an acceptable time window allocated for tournament play (The player can provide the identifier and enter the tournament when the tournament beings and until the tournament ends since Shulman discloses that a player can join the tournament after observing the tournament that's in progress. See Shulman paragraphs 12, 16-18, and 31).

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 11/4/09 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Regarding claims 1-3, 6-7, 9, 13-15, 17-21, 24-25, 61-62, 64, 67-68 rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker'163 in view of Shulman, Applicant argues that there is no reference or passage that teaches that a gaming unit is selected by player first configured for playing in a tournament when a tournament is in progress, and after an identifier is received of the player, and remaining playing time determined, the gaming machine is enabled to play in a tournament thereby allowing a player to use the gaming units join the tournament in progress for a time period. However, as discussed in the rejection above, Walker discloses a gaming unit is

selected by player first configured for playing in a game (by loading and executing the gaming software to play the game, cols. 3:63-4:5), and after an identifier is received of the player (player tracking card, cols. 4:45-49, 6:1-12), and remaining playing time determined the gaming machine (determine the length of the remaining time of flat rate session, cols. 5:5-14, 12:30-51, 13:5-55), is enabled to allowing a player to play a time period (player is enabled to play for time period defined by the flat rate session, cols. 3:6-17, 6:36-55). Shulman discloses playing a tournament game in when the tournament is in progress (paragraph 12, 16-19 and 31), and allowing a player to use the gaming device to join the tournament in progress for a time period (The player can play in the tournament for time period, until the player leaves or until the tournament ends/time remaining in the tournament, paragraphs 12, 16-18, 31). Therefore the combination of Walker and Shulman discloses the claimed invention.

Applicant further argues how Walker does not teach a tournament in progress, and that Shulman fails to teach the determination of the amount of time the player may participate by a timer. In response to applicant's arguments against the references individually, one cannot show nonobviousness by attacking references individually where the rejections are based on combinations of references. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981); *In re Merck & Co.*, 800 F.2d 1091, 231 USPQ 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986). The Walker reference is not relied upon to teach a tournament in progress, and the Shulman reference is not relied upon to teach a determination of the amount of time the player may participate by a timer. As discussed

in rejection and response above, Sulman teaches a tournament in progress, and Walker teaches determination of the amount of time the player may participate by a timer.

Regarding claims 62 and 64 rejected under 35 USC 103 over Walker'163 in view of Shulman and Walker'173, Applicant argues that Walker'173 fails to teach limitations of entry into a tournament in progress, and the duration of time the player is enabled to play. Again, it appears that Applicant ignores the combination of the references. As discussed above Walker'163 and Shulman discloses the limitations.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jasson H. Yoo whose telephone number is (571)272-5563. The examiner can normally be reached on 9:00am - 5:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Dmitry Suhol can be reached on (571) 272-4430. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Jasson H Yoo/
Examiner, Art Unit 3714